

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04893 011218Z

ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO USDEL SECRETARY IN NEW YORK NIACT IMMEDIATE

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INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4893

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS

USUN PASS AMBASSADOR PARKER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR MOPS MILI LE US IS

SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON - CALL ON PRESIDENT SARKIS

REF: (A) STATE 234805, (B) STATE 235946, (C) USDAO IR 6 857 0094 77

1. CHARGE, ACCOMPANIED BY EMBASSY OFFICER MOLINEAUX, CALLED ON PRESIDENT SARKIS AT BAABDA 0900 OCTOBER 1 AND PRESENTED HIM WITH LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER (REF A). SARKIS READ LETTER IMMEDIATELY AND SAID HE WAS VERY PLEASED TO RECEIVE IT. HE SAID THAT EVER SINCE PRESIDENT CARTER HAD ASSUMED OFFICE HE HAD BEEN EXTREMELY HELPFUL TO SARKIS PARTICULARLY IN RECENT DAYS ON PROBLEM OF SOUTH LEBANON. HE SAID HE WOULD BE RESPONDING FORMALLY IN DUE COURSE. FOLLOWING THE MEETING, HE ASKED IF THE LETTER COULD BE "GIVEN TO THE PRESS." CHARGE REPLIED, PURSUANT INSTRUCTIONS (REFTEL B) THAT WE PREFERRED NOT, AND SARKIS AGREED.

2. FOLLOWING CHARGE'S PRESENTATION OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER, SARKIS HIMSELF STRESSED IMPORTANCE, NOW THAT CEASEFIRE IS IN
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EFFECT, OF MOVING FORWARD QUICKLY WITH ILMAC MEETING AND DEPLOYMENT OF LEBANESE ARMY TROOPS TO THE SOUTH. THE PRESENT SITUATION, WITH THE FORMER COMBATANTS STARING DOWN EACH OTHER'S GUN BARRELS, WAS TOO DANGEROUS TO BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE, HE SAID. GOL WISHED TO CONVENE ILMAC AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND ARMY COMMANDER KHOURY WAS NOW AWAITING ISRAELI REPLY FROM ILMAC CHAIRMAN LT. COL. ESPINASSY. ONCE ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN MADE, LEBANESE TROOPS

COULD MOVE WITHIN THREE OR FOUR DAYS. GOL WOULD PREFER, FOR APPEARANCE SAKE, THAT FIRST ILMAC MEETING BE ON LEBANON TERRITORY, BUT THIS WAS NOT ESSENTIAL. IMPORTANT THING WAS TO CONTINUE MOMENTUM TOWARDS PEACE. SARKIS INDICATED HE WAS FULLY AWARE THAT ISRAELIS MIGHT SEEK TO RAISE ISSUES OUTSIDE OF SCOPE OF ILMAC. HE SAID LEBANON NEEDED U.S. SUPPORT ON CONTINUING BASIS IN ITS DEALING WITH ISRAEL; "WE CAN'T FACE THEM ALONE." WHEN CHARGE ASKED IF HE HAD ANYTHING SPECIFIC IN MIND AT THIS TIME, SARKIS SAID NO, BUT HOPED THAT U.S. WOULD CONTINUOUSLY PROVIDE MORAL SUPPORT TO GOL IN DEALING WITH ISRAELIS. HE MENTIONED THAT HE HAD ALREADY PROMISED TO TRY TO PERSUADE PALESTINIANS TO WITHDRAW FURTHER THAN POSITIONS ALLOWED THEM UNDER SHTAURA AGREEMENT, ONCE THIS AGREEMENT HAD BEEN IMPLEMENTED. HE SAW THIS AS MORAL COMMITMENT ON HIS PART, ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT PROMISE THAT HE WOULD SUCCEED. IN MEANTIME, HE WOULD NEED USG CONTINUING HELP IN PERSUADING THE ISRAELIS NOT TO INTERFERE WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF SHTAURA AGREEMENT. SARKIS SAID HE WOULD BE MEETING AGAIN WITH GENERAL KHOURY THIS MORNING TO DISCUSS ILMAC ARRANGEMENTS AND DEPLOYMENT OF LEBANESE ARMY IN SOUTH, AND THAT LEBANESE REPRESENTATIVES TO ILMAC HAD ALREADY BEEN NAMED.

3. CHARGE THEN RAISED QUESTION OF STATIONING OF SOVIET UNMOS IN SOUTH LEBANON, SAYING THAT USG BELIEVED THIS WOULD BE A MISTAKE SINCE IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY INCREASE THE DIFFICULTY OF COMING TO PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE ISRAELIS. SARKIS REPLIED THAT HE HAD BEEN INTENDING TO RAISE THIS SUBJECT. SARKIS SAID THAT
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FONMIN BOUTROS HAD CABLED HIM PREVIOUS DAY, REPORTING THAT UN SECGEN HAD RAISED QUESTION OF ASSIGNING SOVIET UNMOS IN SOUTH LEBANON. BOUTROS HAD ASKED FOR INSTRUCTIONS. SARKIS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THERE WERE NOW 22 UNMOS ASSIGNED AND ASKED WHY MORE WERE NEEDED. CHARGE REPLIED HE WAS NOT EXPERT ON THIS SUBJECT, BUT UNDERSTOOD PRESENT GROUP OF UNMOS WAS STRETCHED THIN. SARKIS SAID HE THOUGHT NEITHER U.S. NOR SOVIET PERSONNEL WERE USED FOR SUCH DUTY. CHARGE REPLIED THAT U.S. OFFICERS WERE NOW SERVING AS UNMOS. SARKIS THEN REFERRED TO RECENT NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF PLANS TO SEND AN ADDITIONAL 400 UN PERSONNEL TO SOUTH LEBANON. WE SAID WE KNEW OF NO SUCH PLANS. (SARKIS MAY HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO RECENT SPECULATIVE PRESS REPORTS THAT A UN FORCE, NOT UNMOS, COULD BE ASSIGNED TO SOUTH LEBANON). AFTER SOME FURTHER DISCUSSION, SARKIS SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS THE PROBLEM FURTHER WITH GENERAL KHOURY. IF HE WAS CONVINCED ILMAC NEEDED MORE OBSERVERS, HE WOULD INSTRUCT BOUTROS TO AGREE TO AN INCREASE PROVIDED ANY NEW UNMOS WOULD COME FROM THE SAME COUNTRIES WHICH NOW PROVIDED THEM. HE ASKED IF THIS WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO US. CHARGE SAID HE HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS POINT BUT THAT IT SOUNDED LIKE A REASONABLE SUGGESTION. CHARGE SUGGESTED THAT SARKIS INSTRUCT BOUTROS TO DISCUSS THIS IDEA WITH THE SECRETARY DURING THEIR MEETING TODAY, BEFORE GIVING FORMAL GOL REPLY TO THE UN. IN CLOSING

THE CONVERSATION, SARKIS AGREED THAT INJECTION OF SOVIET OBSERVERS
IN SOUTH LEBANON AT THIS TIME WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE A GOOD IDEA.

4. COMMENT:

A. SARKIS IS NOT A DEMONSTRATIVE MAN BUT HE WAS CLEARLY TOUCHED
BY PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER.

B. BOTH SARKIS AND KHOURY FULLY UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF
HAVING AN ILMAC MEETING AND GETTING LEBANESE TROOPS TO THE SOUTH
AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THEY ARE PREPARED TO DO SO AS SOON AS
THE MODALITIES CAN BE WORKED OUT WITH THE ISRAELIS. BEING A
REALIST, SARKIS KNOWS THAT THERE ARE STILL MANY PROBLEMS AHEAD
AND IS COUNTING ON OUR CONTINUING HELP WITH THE ISRAELIS IN
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RESOLVING THEM. HE KNOWS THAT WITHOUT SUCH SUPPORT HE CANNOT
SUCCEED.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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